

THE Pacific Commercial Advertiser

A MORNING PAPER.

WALTER G. SMITH - - - - - EDITOR
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THE FEDERAL LABOR QUESTION.

If there is unattached citizen labor enough in the Territory to fill the Federal contracts at Honolulu, we hope it will be employed. The men on the ground should have the first chance; those at a distance should be drawn upon only when the supply is lacking here. That is a simple matter of neighborly fair play; for a community that will not look out for its own is "worse than the infidel."

Many of our friends like the idea of bringing men in from the Coast and adding them to the population. There are some good points about this plan, but there are more disadvantages. So long as a willing worker on the soil is idle, he is only making matters worse for him by importing a man for the job he could fill. Furthermore, our own citizen labor we have no trouble with, but citizen labor from California might do the community more harm than good.

For instance, the laborers brought from California in 1899 by Lord & Belser and by the contractors who were putting up new buildings, at once organized unions and made themselves obnoxious to the business community by their threats of boycotting and their war on Orientals. Among the last things they did in Honolulu before the general break-up which followed the decline and fall of the boom was to catalogue the number of Oriental clerks and roustabouts employed by business men, the idea being to make trouble in the rare old California fashion. Had they kept their numerical strength the trouble would have come.

Secondly, these California laborers, who had gained a residence, almost unanimously voted against the Republican and Democratic tickets in favor of the Home Rulers, doing much to elect the demagogue Wilcox. It was not that they cared for Wilcox, but that they wanted to vote against the employing classes. They were against property, stability, conservatism, capital. When they went home, they swelled the ranks of the Schmitz-Ruef movement, and if they had stayed here they would have engineered that kind of a movement in the territory.

Honolulu wants no anti-Chinese, anti-Japanese politics; it wants no strike infections spread; it wants no more graft in public affairs than it has in hand. And the city feels no admiration whatever for the California type of white labor as a class, however satisfactory some individual elements in it may be.

True, the islands need more white population, but the small farmer is the man for that. He produces something from the soil and stays by it; he never strikes; he is a friend of law and order, and he builds up a typical American community wherever he is. There is no dynamite exploded under other people's houses by him; he ties up no railroads and blows up no power-plants; and when he gets a chance to vote he picks out the honest men.

Of course, in one sense, what the Federal contractors do is none of Honolulu's business; but it will do no harm to discuss the matter of labor in all its bearings and let the authorities know what experience has taught the people here.

IMPROVEMENT IN COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL CONDITIONS.

The cloud of uncertainty which has been hanging over the business element of the United States is, in the opinion of the British commercial agent in this country, passing away. In a recent report to Parliament on this subject, Mr. Seymour Bell, the British commercial agent in the United States, says:

"The year 1907 was one of sharp contrasts in the United States. It was a year of great activity and deep depression. During the earlier months all industries were exceedingly busy, and mills were working at their utmost capacity. Many unfilled orders had been carried over from the previous year and buyers were experiencing great difficulty in getting delivery of their goods. The railway lines were congested, wages were at their highest, and the high price of commodities raised the price of living to an extreme point. It was recognized by all those in a position to form an independent opinion that this tremendous industrial activity could not last; that it was merely a question of time before a reaction would set in. It became quite evident that the country was living beyond its means. Money was becoming scarce, and the railways and other corporations were encountering great difficulties in obtaining the capital necessary to carry on the improvements and extensions which were in process of being carried out. Speculation in mining and real estate had been rife and personal extravagance was at its height. This all tended to place additional burdens on the money supplies, which were hardly adequate to carry on the industries of the country. The railways were among the earliest and greatest sufferers from the financial stringency. They found it almost impossible to dispose of securities at a reasonable price, and were forced to issue short-time notes at a comparatively high rate of interest to enable them to continue their developments. As wages were high, owing to the scarcity of labor, and high prices were being paid for materials, the net earnings of the railways were considerably reduced, although the gross earnings showed an increase. This brought about lower quotations for railway shares and the industries followed the downward path.

The situation was peculiar. On the one hand there were the manufacturers with more orders than they could fill and busy enlarging their plants, merchants selling large quantities of goods at satisfactory prices, labor in such demand that even with the addition of the 1,200,000 immigrants it was necessary to employ inefficient workers at good wages. On the other hand, there was dear money, owing to scarcity.

"When, owing to a failure in New York, light was thrown on the management of some of the large financial concerns in the city, public confidence, which had previously been undermined by certain investigations, gave way completely, resulting in an acute money panic. Careful students of the situation had foreseen a collapse before the end of the year, but did not anticipate that it would come with such suddenness.

"The panic was entirely financial. It has, it is true, brought about a wide-spread suspension of trade and industry throughout the country, but there has been no throwing on the market of merchandise at ruinous prices, the usual accompaniment of industrial panics. The manufacturers, on the contrary, faced the inevitable, and without delay proceeded to curtail the supply and thus reduce such chances as there might have been of glutting the market with unsalable articles. Fortunately for the country, warning of the trouble was given early, and it was possible to take steps in time to prepare for it.

"As to the length of time the present depression will last, it is difficult to form an opinion. It must not be forgotten that the farmers, who form the backbone of American prosperity, have not been affected by the financial situation. Though the crops in 1907 fell short in quantity as compared with 1906, higher prices were obtained, and the farmers received considerably more money for their crops than in the previous year. A country that produces crops valued at nearly \$1,500,000,000 sterling is unlikely to suffer long from industrial stagnation. It represents too large an amount to be held long uninvested. Farmers have had nine years of almost uninterrupted prosperity, their buying power is high, and the towns dependent upon them will remain prosperous.

"The farmers who a few years ago owed money now own money and have an assured outlet for their products, as there is no oversupply.

"The cloud of uncertainty, which has been hanging over the country for so long and gradually growing more threatening, is now passing away, and it may be said that the worst of the storm has now passed. There will in all probability be mercantile disturbances for some months to come, but readjustment and recuperation are well under way, and unless labor troubles should retard the improvement or monopolies of capital interfere to keep up prices at too high a level, it is expected that before many months have passed business will be on a safer and more normal basis."

So Moses Cummins is to lead the road-workers back to the promised land of politics in good time for the primaries. Well, well! Experience is a dear school, but a certain class of politicians will learn in no other.

The editorial comment of the Advertiser upon Major Haan's address in Honolulu on The Militia and Coast Defenses, is reproduced, with sections of Major Haan's remarks, in the Army and Navy Journal.

"Remember the Maine." She'll be here pretty soon and bring along the Alabama. It will be a good plan to watch the sailors and see what kind of entertainment they like best.

The Farmers' Institute should ask Secretary Garfield while here for a hearing on the small farm question. He ought to know the farm situation as well as that of labor.

COMING SAILORS WILL FIND MANY FRIENDS

At the regular daily meeting of the executive committee of the fleet entertainment and reception committee held yesterday, the sum of \$100 was voted for the committee's own expenses.

The use of the Hawaiian band was tendered to Captain Rees from 4 to 6 o'clock on July 17 to give a concert at the Naval Station.

A motion was made by J. A. McCandless, but withdrawn, that the chairman cable President Roosevelt asking him to order the sixteen battle-ships hither to coal instead of having four coal at Lahaina.

It was suggested that a committee be appointed to welcome the battle-ships Maine and Alabama, due here next Monday. The chairman will communicate with Acting Governor Mott-Smith about the matter.

W. F. Dillingham, chairman of the commissary committee, stated that it was the wish of his committee to erect a large sleeping tent, lavatories, etc., on the Capitol grounds for the use of the sailors; also to provide for the accommodation of at least 150 men at the Sailors' Home. An appropriation of \$700 was granted for the work.

At 1:30 on Friday there will be a special meeting of the executive committee and the chairmen of the different subcommittees for the purpose of ascertaining what has been done and conferring on plans for future activity.

It is earnestly requested by the executive committee that all the chairmen be present at this meeting.

The corrected lists of the committees on Maui and Kauai are as follows:

Maui—A. N. Kepoikai, chairman; H. P. Baldwin, D. H. Case, J. L. Coke, W. Henning, Young Tong, S. Kimura, W. P. Hala, A. N. Hayselden, H. A. Baldwin, S. E. Kalama, T. B. Lyons, W. J. Coelho, J. W. Recard, J. W. Kalua.

Kauai—A. F. Knudsen, J. F. Silva, G. N. Wilcox, W. H. Rice, Jr., J. K. Gandall, Hee Fat, George H. Fairchild, B. D. Baldwin, Francis Gay, W. J. Sheldon.

ALL THE ISLANDS TO PROVIDE A HOOKUP

The commissary committee of the fleet entertainment committee, at a meeting held yesterday, decided to have an Inter-Island hookup, not a Honolulu affair, but one in which the entire group shall take part in the distribution of island fruits.

A communication will be sent today to the District Magistrates all over the islands requesting them to confer with the chairmen of the different committees away from here and have the fruit collected and forwarded to Honolulu before the fleet arrives. The Inter-Island Steam Navigation Co. has volunteered to bring such freight free of charge and on arrival it will be received by representatives of the commissary committee.

On the day of the hookup the fruit will be assorted according to its condition and sent to the ships for distribution among the men, with the belief that it will last several days, for some of it will be in keeping condition. Barges will be decorated in holiday style and besides a crew of men each will have, as committees, attractive young ladies who will see that the fruit goes to the ships according to the quota of men, that the one with four hundred bluejackets will not get the luxuries which should go to the ship with a complement of eight hundred men.

A hookup means the carrying of gifts to the guest and the committee believes that greater satisfaction would follow taking the fruit to the vessels and distributing it than to put it in different places around the city and compel the men to go after it. The last affair of this character in Honolulu where an American naval officer was so honored was in 1892, when the citizens showed their aloha to Admiral Brown on his arrival with the body of Kalakaua. That took place on Brewer's wharf and the line of persons carrying gifts, which included everything from highly wrought mats and hats, pigs, fish, fruit and vegetables, down to sticks of sugar cane, extended from the wharf to Hotel street. Many of the Hawaiian women insisted upon showing a still deeper aloha for the admiral and threw their arms around his neck and kissed him, much to his embarrassment.

FEDERAL CONTRACT LABOR RECRUITAGE

Mr. R. H. Trent, president of the Trent Trust Company, is one of the many business men of the city taking an active interest in the pending question of the quantity and quality of labor to be employed in the various large federal contracts to be undertaken here within the next few months. Mr. Trent says that he is in favor of first turning to the possible available local supply of both rough labor and mechanics amongst those who are citizens or eligible to become such and that wage scales should be liberal. One report is that the figure for ordinary labor has already been fixed and that it is \$2.20 per day at Pearl City and on fortifications around Honolulu.

It is recalled by Mr. Trent that Lord & Belser, who laid the Honolulu sewer system in 1899 brought their rough labor from California—all white men and probably all American citizens. A few of these men are here yet, holding various responsible positions. It is believed by Mr. Trent and others that quite naturally if a private firm could induce or bring white men here from the Coast to work with pick and shovel, the federal officers could certainly do the same, after exhausting the local supply, especially if the wage scale is to be as liberal as reported. Retail merchants of the city would,

as a matter of course, be immensely pleased to see again in Honolulu labor of the class brought here by Lord & Belser for the sewer contract.

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